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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON WAR ON IRAQ

Summary

-- The war on Iraq continues to dominate the Jordanian press today, March 24. Lead stories include wire service reports under huge banner headlines depicting "fierce battles and ferocious resistance" between the Iraqis and the Coalition forces. All papers highlight the capture of American POWs on their front pages, and include photos taken from television footage. One paper's banner headline reads "A day packed with losses for the American and British forces". Another lead story highlights remarks made by Jordanian Prime Minister, Ali Abul Ragheb, during a press conference held yesterday. The Prime Minister spoke about the expulsion of three Iraqi diplomats from Jordan and stressed that there are no military activities against Iraq from Jordan. The Prime Minister also declared that the government of Jordan would launch "extensive efforts" to stop the war.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Brutal American raids"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/24): "They [Americans] say that they are not targeting the Iraqi people but Saddam Hussein. If this true, then why are they dropping thousands of bombs on Iraq? If they knew where Saddam Hussein was, they would only need a single bomb, but the dropping thousands of bombs is meant against the Iraqi people. The point is that they [the Iraqi people] become shocked and awed by the brutality of the American bombing, a brutality never before witnessed by the world. This war is not a secret one. The world is following it live on their television screens.. This public coverage has exposed the level of brutality and blood-thirsty nature for shedding Arab blood and has produced great anger in not only Arabs and Muslims but also in every honorable human being with a sense for what is going on in the world. America is not standing in the face of only the Iraqi people, but also in the face of all the people of this world. America has come to isolate Iraq, but instead has isolated itself. It has come to disarm the weapons of mass destruction, but instead became the biggest user of those weapons. It has come to implement Security Council resolutions, but instead ended up bypassing the Council, ignoring its will and acted unilaterally. This is not the third Gulf war. It is rather the second American-Arab war. Does Bush now know that his actions make up the answer to his question: "Why do they hate us?"

-- "Is there not a joint Arab action?"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/24) editorializes: "The fourth day of the American war on Iraq was not one of the 'happy days' for Washington and London. The media confusion and the conflicting stories exposing much false information and lies about the battles and the size of losses showed without a shadow of a doubt that what is happening on the ground is completely different from what the American and British spokespeople are saying and promoting.. The images of children and innocent victims in Basra shook the minds and hearts and thwarted the 'fairy tale of a clean war' that Washington had promoted. Yet, if the United States resorts to excessive use of power in the coming days, it would likely make this war, which already lacks legitimacy, the ugliest war. Such developments and fears strengthen the need to launch diplomatic and political initiatives that would put an end to this crazy war and would restore respect to diplomacy and international legitimacy, which were destroyed as a result of America's arrogance and Washington's determination to beat the drums of war without any

consideration to the Security Council, the U.N. Charter and calls of millions of human beings to stop the war."

-- "Where is international legitimacy?"

Daily columnist Bader Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/24): "The dust of battles, bombings and military confrontations must not suggest that the war is matter-of-fact or that it enjoys legitimacy. The reality is that three countries, the United States, Britain and Australia, have acted militarily, and without Security Council authorization, to invade another country that is a member of the United Nations.. If the United Nations fails to stand up to the big aggressor, then its role and moral credibility are as good as finished. The responsibility now lies on the shoulders of the Secretary General, the Security Council and member states. If they choose to live in a jungle led by the United States, then they can avoid their duties now; but if they want to restore respect to the United Nations, then they must perform their role of condemning and rejecting the American invasion and stress the illegality and illegitimacy of this invasion."

-- "Iraq steadfastness and American confusion"

Daily columnist Yaser Za'atreh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/24): "It is a sure thing that the American and British forces are trying hard to avoid striking against civilians and are striving to be accurate in selecting their military targets, despite the fact that a large number of civilians have fallen victims. This concern does not stem from any compassion for the Iraqi people, rather from fear of the repercussions of the Arab and international public opinion.. It is also safe to say that the Iraqi resistance was a surprise, not only for the Americans but also for all observers. The silliness of remarks about the Iraqi desire to embrace and receive the invaders with open arms is proven. This is in addition to the presence of rejection that is enough to stir a confrontation that, in turn, would not give the Americans an easy victory.. The invaders are confused, and their confusion is making them make more mistakes. It might not stop the course of occupation, but it will make it difficult. History will write that Iraq did not surrender, but resisted with all its might at a time when regimes were watching with folded arms or opening their lands for the invaders."

GNEHM